

Educators Convene at Pace's Retention Conference



From left are Pace University President Marvin Krislov, J.D.; Pace Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Nira Herrmann, Ph.D.; Rockland Community College President Michael Baston, J.D., Ed.D.; Pace Incoming Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Vanya Quiñones, Ph.D.; and Pace Assistant Vice President for Student Success Sue Maxam, Ed.D. (Baston accepts special recognition award at the conference.)

Students who complete a college degree will earn an average of \$20,000 a year more to start than those who only complete some college.

That was one of the many facts that educators from across the region learned when they gathered June 15 for Pace University's second annual Retention Conference, titled "Student Success and Persistence to Graduation." More than 200 educators from 32 public and private colleges shared best practices on how to keep students from dropping out of school, at the conference hosted by Pace University's Office of the Provost.

Among the schools attending were Mercy College, Temple University, Lehman College CUNY, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dominican College, Manhattanville College, the College of New Rochelle, California State University, Fresno, and the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

The day included keynote and luncheon presentations, as well as breakout sessions and a closing roundtable discussion.

Pace University President Marvin Krislov, J.D., one of the day's keynote speakers, said colleges needed to try harder to make students feel welcome and to connect them to resources to help them stay in school.

Nationally, only 60 percent of college freshmen make it to their sophomore year. Students drop out for a variety of reasons including lack of financial support, or social and academic difficulties.

"It's so easy for people to fall off," said Krislov, adding that many students who run into problems are not aware of the resources available to help them.

Krislov gave two examples: one of a student who dropped out after running out of mon-

ey who was not aware of scholarships that were available, and another student who was in jeopardy of dropping out because of difficulty juggling his schedule. Pace was able to help both students by connecting them to the appropriate resources.

He said Pace University's retention rate continues to improve in part because of increased faculty-student engagement, financial counseling, and the Pace Path with mentorship, experiential learning and individualized plans for academic success. While the improved retention rate is a major accomplishment, he added that colleges, including Pace, still needed to do a better job.

Rockland Community College President Michael Baston, J.D., Ed.D., the morning's other keynote speaker, said that helping students to feel connected and welcome in their environment was important. He said his school works to find out student interests and to connect them to clubs and social groups that match those interests.

Baston said pairing freshman with mentors from their home high schools was another way to make new students feel connected.

Nira Herrmann, Ph.D., interim provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Pace, said that many students failed simply because they had difficulty navigating the academic bureaucracy. She gave the example of a college senior who told her he was planning on attending graduate school but was not aware that the deadline for applying had long passed.

"Many students do not really understand the rules," she said. "When we think we are communicating, we are not."

For more information, visit www.pace.edu.